



## JAN GUNNAR HOFF

### FLY NORTH

*Fly North; Living; Arise; Places; Sacrifice; Böcklin; Spheres; Valse de Décembre; Questions; Gathering (57.00)*

Jan Gunnar Hoff (p, kyb); Arve Henriksen (t, v); Anders Jormin (b); Marilyn Mazur (pc). Oslo, October/November 2013.

### Losen 119

★★★

If ever you needed evidence of the rude health of the contemporary Scandinavian scene, 55-year-old Norwegian pianist Jan Gunnar Hoff makes a fascinating study. In *Town* (Curling Legs, 2003) is amongst the best Scandi-jazz never to have been released by Manfred Eicher, giving Matthias Eick and Manu Katché's recent groups a real run for their money. He has worked with a who's who of the region's leading lights and many visiting Americans (including Pat Metheny and Mike Stern). Yet Hoff's interna-

tional profile somehow lags woefully behind his impeccable artistic credentials.

In Henriksen, Jormin and Mazur the pianist has chosen three really strong individuals to share his latest journey. Several of the pieces on *Fly North* have been aired elsewhere (tracks 1, 2 and 5 appear on the recent solo piano set *Living*), but Henriksen's uniquely expressive voice adds an entirely new depth and richness. Renowned for his excursions into electronica, the trumpeter deploys little in the way of radical sound processing here, though his interplay with Hoff's keyboards brings some beguiling shades of the Orient to *Places*.

Mazur is subtlety personified, and along with Jormin she has the uncanny knack of filling spaces with the perfect notes or accents. Hoff really digs in, and his rhythmically charged solo on *Gathering* is amongst his very best. The relative success of this particular album may ultimately be coloured by listeners' own individual pre-dispositions towards Henriksen, but Jan Gunnar Hoff's days as one of Norway's best-kept secrets must surely be numbered.

Fred Grand